**Motivational Mondays interview:**

**Adam Grant – *Airing* 02.08.2021 (Part 2)**

**Music intro** [00:00:00-00:00:01]

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:02] Welcome ladies and gentlemen to Motivational Mondays.

I’m your host Max Irzhak, and joining us this week for Part 2 of his interview is Adam Grant. If you haven’t already listened to last week’s episode, I encourage you to start there. We explore the power of relearning and knowing what you don't know.

He’s been recognized as one of the world’s10 most influential management thinkers.

He’s been the top-rated professor at Wharton for 7 years in a row.

He’s earned his place on Fortune’s 40 Under 40 list.

An author of four New York Times bestselling books that have sold millions of copies, and translated into 35 languages.

And he had a *fairly* popular TED Talk, raking in 17 million views and picking up a standing ovation along the way.

As an organizational psychologist for some of the biggest brands in the world, he is an expert on helping us find meaning at work, and live more generous and creative lives.

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce this week’s guest, Adam Grant.

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:56] So, we hear that success has a lot to do with luck, timing, and opportunity. How can people create opportunities? How can they be in the right room at the right time?

**Adam Grant** [00:01:08] Milton Burrow probably said it best when he said “if opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” I’ve spent a lot of my career studying the differences between reactive and proactive people, and reactive people basically wait for life to happen to them. Proactive people take the initiative to question the way things have always been done; to raise problems and concerns, and suggestions, and to run experiments, right, and say “look, i don't know if this is going to work or not, but i sure want to find out what happens if i try.”

I think the people that i've often learned from the most on this are entrepreneurs. So over the past couple of years, i've asked Sara Blakely how did you find the confidence to start Spanx when you didn't know anything about fashion, or retail, or business. I’ve asked Reid Hoffman “how did you know that you were ready to start LinkedIn when you’ve worked in tech, but you hadn’t really built something like this. And they both told me something very similar which is neither of them had any confidence their idea was going to succeed. So Sara said “I had massive doubts about my current knowledge and expertise and skills. Reid said the same thing, but they both said “you know what, I had confidence in my ability to learn.” And I think that’s the right confidence to build. You do not have to have certainty or conviction in your current capabilities, you just have to trust in your ability to master a new skill, to accumulate new knowledge, and to be a good learner. And I think fundamentally that's what students are, right? Being a student is all about excellence in learning, and if you see yourself as a successful learner, there aren’t very many challenges that seem impossible.

**Max Irzhak** [00:02:55] I’ve also heard you say on that same topic, that you almost have to fail several times before you succeed. You have to keep throwing those innovations at the wall, what you think are original ideas… and the more times they don’t work, all that means is that you’re one step closer to finding that one thing that *will* work.

**Adam Grant** [00:03:12] Yeah, we see this over and over again in creative fields. If you look at studies of inventors, scientists, artists, musicians… the people who tend to be the greatest innovators are the ones who fail the most, because they were the ones who tried the most. They generated just a huge amount of variety, and a lot of the ideas they tested turned out to be deadends and false-starts. But it gave them more shots on goal, and they had a better chance then at stumbling into something that was going to be great.

**Max Irzhak** [00:03:42] And what makes a great leader? What skills do we need to learn along the way to become a great leader?

**Adam Grant** [00:03:49] For me, leadership breaks down into character and competence. From a character perspective, I look for generosity, integrity, humility as table stakes. I think you have to care about something larger than yourself, you have to put other people’s wellbeing and success above your own. You have to be not only aware of your weaknesses, but willing to work on them and overcome them or transcend them in some way, and you have to stand by a set of values and principles that other people agree are worthy.

The *skills* I think are easier to build. So, when we look at effective leaders, we know that they tend to be glorified for being charismatic and transformational. So we admire the leaders who are inspiring speakers, and who dream up a completely new way of seeing the world, and then create the reality-distortion field to convince other people that it’s actually possible. I think we underestimate the importance of the less sexy, the less celebrated abilities to manage and execute.

I don't care how bold your vision is, how compelling your dream is, if you cannot mobilize people to get it done. If you can't set clear goals, give people feedback, gather input on your decisions, hold people accountable, then you’re not going to accomplish very much. And so i think we should stop looking at leaders as leaders who stand on a mountain and get everyone to follow them, and start looking at leaders as people who are willing to roll up their sleeves, get their hands dirty, and do the grunt work that’s necessary to make their lofty visions a reality.

**Max Irzhak** [00:05:38] That’s actually a very interesting point. When people are starting off their careers, and they’re at the bottom of the ladder, you always hear them say “I can do this way better”, and they point out the flaws in leadership.

But when those same people become leaders themselves, something gets lost along the way, and many people just default to being those same poor leaders. What happens on that journey?

**Adam Grant** [00:06:03] I think there are two different stories about what happens. The standard story is that power corrupts. That over time, you start to drink your own kool aid, your ego gets too big, you get surrounded by people who just flatter you and tell you what you want to hear, as opposed to what you *need* to hear. I think there’s some of that, and I think we can all name leaders who have fallen into that trap. There’s a lot of evidence that power can actually make you more self-centered.

But I think we also need to also account for the other story that’s supported by evidence. Which is that power reveals. I've seen this in the work that I've done on Givers, Takers, and Matchers. So if you think about leaders across the spectrum, the givers are the ones who want to know what can I do for you. The takers have this mentality of what can you do for me. And the matchers basically say look ill do something for you if you do something for me. What I've found is that matching is the most common style for most people in most workplaces, because they don't want to be too selfish, they also don't want to be too selfless. And so they say okay, i'll trade favors fair and square and make things even. Interestingly, if you go to the very top of organizations, matching almost entirely vanishes as a style of interaction because you don't have to play it safe anymore. And what we see is as leaders gain power, they feel like they have permission now to express whatever their true values are. So if you were a taker, you no longer have to be a faker. You can throw the matching out the window and say hey i'm in charge now, and this is all about me, and i'm going to run this organization for my own benefit.

If you were a giver, you don't have to worry as much about the takers exploiting you, you don't have to play this matching game. And you can say you know what i'm going to now become a servant leader; i'm going to be as generous as i can be, and try to make sure that the mission and the organization and the people in it come first. And so, I think that sometimes when it looks like leaders have lost sight of their values, what’s actually happened is the takers now feel like they have the license and the authority to express the selfish values they had all along.

**Max Irzhak** [00:08:13] What is one thought you want our audience to walk away with? What is some actionable advice?

**Adam Grant** [00:08:20] One piece of actionable advice would be: I'm sure you have a support network, a group of people who believe in your potential, care about your success, encourage you when you’re down. You also need a challenge network. A group of people who you trust to make sure that you are doing your best work, that you are making wise decisions, that you are living by your values.

So I think about my challenge network as my toughest critics. They’re the people who if i send them a draft of an article, or an initial idea for a talk, or even just walk them through a big decision i'm thinking about making—they will just decemate it, because they want to make sure i've thought it through very carefully.

And so what i've done after writing Think Again, i did a whole chapter about the value of a challenge network is i've actually started reaching out to people and saying “hey you might not know this, but i consider you a founding member of my challenge network. And i probably haven't...forget the probably, i know there are times when you’ve criticized me that i haven't taken it that well, but i want you to know how much value i've gotten out of it, and i want you to never stop.

And what i've noticed now is i get a lot more criticism from those people. And it might be 4% less fun, but i learn at least 40% more than i did before.

**Max Irzhak** [00:09:45] Adam, it’s been truly amazing. Thank you for all the insight and for encouraging everyone to keep an open mind, to keep pursuing the truth and for helping us all become better leaders.

**Adam Grant** [00:09:55] Thank you for having me. I hope there’s some things I said that you’ll help me rethink next time we talk.

**Max Irzhak** [00:10:00] Adam’s new book “THINK AGAIN: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know” is now available nationwide. Just use the link in the description to buy it today.

We’ll also be giving away free copies of THINK AGAIN to 20 lucky NSLS members on social media.

To enter, share one thing you’ve rethought in the last year using #theNSLS, and tagging us @theNSLS on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn.

Thank you everyone for listening, and don't forget to subscribe on your favorite podcast platforms. We’ll see you next time on Motivational Mondays.

**Music intro** [00:10:32-00:10:36]